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# The Soldier Boy She Lost

Mrs. Katherine Smith-Spencer





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THREE OF THE SOLDIER BOYS  
(FROM A TINTYPE TAKEN IN KENTUCKY IN 1861)



# The Soldier Boy She Lost

By

Mrs. Katherine Smith-Spencer



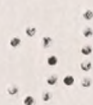
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JUL 24 1919



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DEDICATION

TO

My Mother

and her

Soldier Boys







# The Soldier Boy She Lost

## I.

“**P**UT up your playthings now, dearies. Time to pull out the trundle-bed!”

“We haven’t any playthings to pick up tonight, mother. Since you went up to grandmother’s room to tuck her in, we have been looking at pictures.”

A fair-haired boy arose from his kneeling position on the floor, where, spread out, was the large-sheeted copy of Harper’s Weekly of the early days. The sad face of Abraham Lincoln was pictured there, and over this the blue-eyed boy had concentrated his thoughts which now and then were spoken as he took lingering glances at the page below him.

“Why does he look so sad, mother, when his little boy stands so close to him? I should think he would be happy to have such a nice little boy—father always smiles when I cuddle up to him. Abraham Lincoln always looks so sad to me, mother.” Without waiting for the mother’s reply to his question, the little fellow continued: “Grandmother says it is because the spirit moves



so deeply within his heart. Today she said, when we were talking about him, 'Thee knows, does thee not, dear, that a great question is on his mind, that the spirit may move him to speak the words, "To Arms." Thee knows it must make him sad to say, "My countrymen, thee must fight for the Stars and Stripes, and the poor slaves.' "

"Grandmother loves peace," said the mother, "and even when she feels the cause is just, it would grieve her but in this case she might call the sword holy should it free the blackmen, many of whom she had sheltered and helped to pass on to freedom."

"Yes, by way of the 'Underground Railway;' she has told me all about it."

At this juncture a dark-eyed little girl who all this time had still been turning the pages, over which the two children had been gazing, spoke out in quickness of tone, as she somewhat rudely closed the magazine on the floor.

"I do wish brother wouldn't be so serious; I thought he never would let me turn the page. I'd rather look at Mrs. Lincoln, when she is just stepping into the great ballroom with her pretty dress. Mr. Lincoln was there too—at a ball



—so now he must smile sometimes—one can't look solemn at a ball!"

The little girl had risen, and stood with rosy cheeks and somewhat flashing eyes at the gentle young boy who still was under the spell of the sad looking face.

"Come on, let's pull out the trundle-bed," kneeling beside the tall four-poster, reaching her hand under the side for a pull on the little bed beneath.

"You can't do it alone, let me help, sister." Together they drew out the snow white trundle-bed with its equally white pillows and coverlet, and while they were made ready for bed the two prattled as little folks will until the time to kneel at their mother's side for the "Now I lay me down to sleep."

When they were nestled underneath the snow-white covers, they talked earnestly of the pictures in the book.

"What color do you suppose Mrs. Lincoln's dress was?" said sister.

"I think it was white, and lace on it. She had roses in her hair," she added.

"I think, sister, they had Mr. Lincoln standing sideways so we couldn't see his face."



"Oh, don't talk about that, I know it is sober," complained little sister.

"But, sister, if there should be war, father and all the boys in the office would have to go to fight."

"Who'd set the type and get the paper wrote up then, I'd like to know," inquired the little sister.

"Yes, I know, but they'd just have to go! They would all volunteer though, I am sure they would."

"I'm glad now," declared little sister, "but I used to cry when grandmother would tell me about how she let the big shears fall and how they cut open father's big toe, it was little then, but it was his big toe anyway, so he is lame, and they won't take lame men. They can't kill him, anyway!"

"Oh, sister, you don't seem to feel any of the spirit working in you. Grandmother says, and she is a Quakeress, too, that she would give up her boys, all of them, if need be, and I told her I'd give up father and Edward and Charlie and Thomas," and the boy paused while a tear found its way to the pillow from the blue eyes, "and Johnnie, too. I wish I were a man, I'd go too!"



"Oh, dear me," cried the little sister, "what would I do if you should go. I don't like to talk about war, I just shiver all over."

"That's 'cause you are a girl!"

"Seems to me my little boy and girl do not get to sleep as they should," gently admonished the mother. "Cuddle down, and don't talk any more. Bruce, my boy, would you like mother to play for you?"

"Yes, mother, play the 'Cot Beside the Sea,' answered Kitty for him. "He likes that so well, and then play me, 'Jimmy's on the Stormy Sea. No, that will make Bruce cry. Play 'The Frog He Would a-Wooing Go'."

"Very well, dearies, anything to please you." The pretty, dark-eyed mother did not sit down to a piano, neither did she reach for the violin, the guitar or mandolin, but, seating herself in a rocking chair close by the trundle-bed she drew from the pocket of her dress a jew's-harp, and, placing it between her lips, she drew forth with just the tip of her finger, the sweetest of music. As note after note of the sweet old melodies came from the tiny instrument, notes soft and tender like those of music afar off, so soothing in effect, the children became quiet, and soon were in slumber,



deep and restful, such as only comes to those of tender years.

No sooner had the music ceased and the mother resumed her evening work on some dainty article than a voice called, as footsteps sounded in the hall.

"Are the babes awake?" A bright face peeped in the room from the door ajar, followed by a jolly laugh which mother tried to hush.

"Keep still, Charlie, don't make such a noise. You can't have your romp to-night."

"We thought, Mother Libbie, we would get home early enough for that, but the old press broke down and it took all hands to fix it. Papa Joseph will be here soon; he had a thought or two to write before he could leave. Things look bad, mighty blue, and so serious that one can feel in the air the call to arms. We will all go sure enough, and mighty glad we are old enough."

All this, and more, came from the lips of the four printer boys as they settled themselves about the room in the comfortable chairs, drawing them up close to the table to get near to the little mother they all loved. She was not their real mother; they were her boys, nevertheless, and to them she gave the best of her attributes, most freely and



generously; her admonitions were firmly though pleasantly administered, which fact made good impressions upon their minds, lasting and beneficial. Her home was their home, her comforts theirs. In illness she was their tender nurse. Her best thoughts were shared with them. Could an own mother have done more?

And now that a shadow of disaster was hovering about them, increasing each day, growing darker and deeper, they little knew how her tender heart silently quivered, how she pondered night and day over the fact that, as the shadows grew, she could see them march away when the dread summons should come, her four brave printer boys! Down would go the sticks and rules, the old lever press would feel the strength of strangers' arms, the home would be desolate of their merry, boyish voices.

She glanced up from her needlework, looking from one face to another, and gathered from their talk knowledge of the patriotism which imbued them. At the subsidence of their conversation, she told them of the children's talk about the new pictures of President and Mrs. Lincoln, and of the thoughts which were uppermost in the young minds, suggested by the illustrations.



One by one the boys softly stepped to the side of the trundle-bed and gazed at the two little ones they loved.

“Dear little Bruce with his golden locks,” said one. “He is a smart little chap,” said another. So the evening passed, such a one as they long remembered. The mother folded the dainty piece of work as she bade the boys good-night, folded and laid it in the little work basket, and for four long years there it lay, while her busy fingers fashioned only warm mittens, socks, and comforters, long and wide to wind about the necks and shoulders of Uncle Sam’s brave soldier boys!



## II.

THERE was a gay frolic next morning in the garden among the plum trees, and the bright sunshine of April, 1861, played its part to brighten the scene. The white petals of the plum blossoms fell about the yard like the first gentle fall of snowflakes. The boys and the children were racing and romping underneath the branches, from whence the birds had flown, alarmed by the merry voices.

"O, Edward, Charlie has tossed my dollie way up in the highest branch," called Kitty. "Never mind, dear, we'll get her," and away scrambled gentle Edward, with Thomas holding the little girl up to catch the treasure.

Johnny said, "Now, Charlie, what a torment you always are!"

Charlie begged pardon by showering kisses upon the offended little face, when she had the dollie once more hugged to her heart. "I'll never do it again, never! Come on, Bruce, come with us to the corner."



"May I go way down with the boys, mother? I will not stay long."

But the promise was quite forgotten when, as they neared the main street, such excitement prevailed. Men were standing in groups all along the street, business was suspended. Something terrible had happened. The printer boys bounded up the stairs to the office and were soon busy, their fingers flew about the type cases; the old press groaned while the extra papers came out!

Mother Libbie, at home about her duties, was startled when the voice of her little boy called, "Mother, mother, Fort Something has been fired on!"

"O, my boy, you must mean Fort Sumter! Can it be possible?"

"Yes, mother, that is it, and war is coming! Where is my sword and drum and my soldier cap?"

The animated little form vanished into the depths of the little "cubby hole" closet under the stairs, where it rummaged about awhile and emerged with the accoutrements of war. Buckling the tiny sword about his lithe little body, donning the soldier cap, and grabbing the drum, away he flew, yes, and his tin horn added to the list, "a



rub-a-dub-dub, a-rub-a-dub-dub, a-rub-a-dub-dub, a-rub-a-dub-dub," and almost at the first sound little boys from all quarters of the neighborhood seemed to have gathered as if by magic and the excitement grew great as the news of "Fort Something's" downfall was repeated.

"Bruce is captain, come on boys!" a shout went up.

"O, you have to be drafted or volunteer, so come on up to the office and get some paper," said Bruce.

Off they trudged, talking and shouting all at once along the way, up the stairs to the bindery, made a dive into the "tub" where they waded about in search of strips of paper.

In a secluded corner of the office they improvised a table, where the little captain, who seemed delegated without protest, pencil in hand, put down the names in line of the brave "Lincoln volunteers," youthful in the extreme.

And the big boys who were to be the real soldiers were writing their names on the list, the brave volunteers, young men from all conditions of life, in the cities and from the countrysides, from offices, factories and mills, rich and poor,



fathers and sons, all for the cause of the Union and the freeing of the blackman from bondage.

The four printer boys were not so gay as on the evening before; even the little trundle-bed had been allowed to maintain its daytime position under the four-poster, which fact showed that the children were still awake, waiting for the boys, and when, after the excitement of the day, their footsteps were heard on the walk outside, there was no merry laughs, but four sober boys came quietly in, and with outstretched arms and tearful eyes, received the benediction from dear Mother Libbie, "My dear, brave boys, God bless you."

Little Bruce rushed into the arms of first one and then another of the boys, his eyes sparkling with patriotism and pride. But little sister put in a protest to all this show of feeling by wailing, "I don't want the boys to go to any mean war and get killed, I don't. I wish every one of them had smashed toes, I do!"

Soon the streets were lined with marching feet, men in bright soldierly array, the brilliant uniforms of the officers adding luster to the scenes.

Many a gay young girl watched the procession slyly from behind partly closed blinds, hearts



beating time to the music of the bands as they played, "O, I heard the drums beat, and the music so sweet, as they marched through the town to the foot of the street, and the captain with his whiskers took a sly glance at me."

Just outside of town the tents were pitched, the camp fires reddened the sky at evening, the boys singing and laughing, but in the strains of the gayest song there was a note of sadness, and the laughter was bravado, for there were thoughts of the weeping mothers and sweethearts dreading the parting so soon to come.

As a last parting of the way, the company formed in line and up the street it came marching to the depot, where it was to take the train which would bear it away to the sunny south.

Crowds of people thronged the platform to bid the brave boys farewell, and amidst shouts and turmoil arose the sobs piteously rung from hearts of fathers, mothers, sisters and brothers, lovers and little children.

Bruce and little sister were held high in the arms of their parents, crying for the four dear printer boys. The tears ran down the boys' sad faces as they murmured, "Dear little Bruce!"



## III.

FOR months Mother Libbie heard the tramp of little feet up and down the board walk before and at the side of the house.

"Present arms!" "Halt!" "Forward, march!" were the words that she heard, day after day.

The little company, armed with tin swords and sticks, carrying all sorts of drums, horns, and whistles from old Santa's generous bag, kept up the patriotism which their elders engendered in the little hearts by the constant "returns" which formed the topic of discussion day after day, month after month.

When the rain came down in heavy showers at night, often a voice from the trundle-bed would call, "Mother, are you awake?"

"Yes, dear, I am. What do you wish?"

"Do you hear it rain, mother?"

"Yes, pet, go to sleep, never mind it."

"Mother, don't you think the boys are out in it, way down South?"

"Maybe it doesn't rain there."

"I'm afraid it does."



Or when the cold snapped the boards outside, this same little voice would call, "Mother, I am afraid the boys are cold."

"We will hurry the packing of the boxes in the morning; go to sleep, dear."

Again the voice would call, "Mother, maybe there has been another battle, do you s'pose the boys are in it?" Little Bruce could not sleep, always thinking of the boys.

There was the packing of the boxes with lots and lots of warm clothing and good things to eat which would keep, on the long journey. It seemed that for the four years of the war a box always stood in Mother Libbie's sitting room, either partly packed or just ready to be nailed and sent on its way.

Some mother or sister was always coming in to see if there was room in the box to tuck something more. Here comes a pretty girl with a pair of mittens she has just finished! As Mother Libbie kindly finds a place for them, she feels the impress of a tintype, or some keepsake, the sly young thing is sending to her sweetheart in blue!

There were the latest war songs, "The Girl I Left Behind Me," "Marching through Georgia,"



"There Will be One Vacant Chair," "Tramp, Tramp, the Boys Come Marching," and many more, all known to the jew's-harp which Mother Libbie always carried in her pocket and which she played with Bruce as an accompaniment to his drum.



## IV.

“**D**OES thee think, grandmother, that the war will ever end?”

“’Tis long, Bruce, dear. Does thee want to see the boys?”

“Yes, grandmother, when will Mr. Lincoln let them come home?”

“Thee knows as well as I. We can none of us tell.”

“Poor Mr. Lincoln, every picture makes him look sadder, grandmother,”

“Yes, it’s the thought of the brave soldier boys; so many have given up their lives.”

“I am afraid to look at the list any more when it comes to the office. I am so afraid to look at the Bs and Mcs for fear, O, I can’t say it,” the boy sobbed!

“Thee does not like war, does thee, Bruce? There is much Quaker blood in thy veins! It is only when I think of the misery of the poor slaves fleeing for their liberty—many, many of them have I sheltered from the cold and helped to hide



from pursuing masters—that I can reconcile myself to the war.

“In the early day,” continued grandmother, “when we had the ‘Underground Railway,’ Rebecca, my neighbor, had only to place a candle in her north window to give me the sign that she would pass on some poor slave, maybe dressed in her own Quaker gown.

“I remember once that thy uncle, my first born, wished very much at Christmas-time for a tree from the pine forest near our home, which he wished to trim with popcorn and bright holly berries to please the children, but his father, thy grandfather, said, ‘It is a shame to wish to cut the little pine tree for a few hours’ pleasure when it has been growing in the sunshine and shade all these years; leave it rather to grow to be a great tree, and then its trunk and branches can be used to some good purpose!’

“But I persuaded him to cut one little tree for the children’s joy at such a happy time of the year. So the morning of Christmas day he gathered the children about him, and, with axe in hand, he took them into the forest to help him select the little tree.

“Thy uncle lingered at my side and whispered



in my ear, 'Mother, thee had the sign from neighbor Rebecca, didn't thee? Do not think me rude, mother, but I have learned to know the sign and to know when thee is watching for a poor slave. Thee always cleans the candlestick that fits the north window sill, and to-day I saw thee do it. Give me thy confidence, mother, I will not betray thee.'

"How could I resist such an earnest plea from the boy of my heart? I told him he was right, that when the darkness came a black man of the South, and I must guard him, would come, and that I had put the candle in the window, ready to light, so that our neighbor on that side could help, too, and thus guide the fugitive to his liberty. Rebecca had him in her safe keeping and would pass him on to me. When I saw her light in the window I must be on the outlook.

"Merry, indeed, with the pretty tree will thee be. But I must keep a lookout. Now go with thy father."

Away he ran to catch up with the other children. Father allowed them to choose the tree with its bright green branches. With steady strokes of the axe it fell, and the children shouted with joy. They drew it across the white snow



and on into the house. They shelled and popped corn which they strung and hung on the tree, with pretty red berries and the loving gifts. I had made a Santa Claus outfit for thy uncle; he was a boy of fourteen years, so he was to be Old Santa. Out of some rather thick paper I had made a mask for his face, and father had brought in a string of bells from the barn.

“Through all the fun and frolic I kept an eye on the watch for neighbor Rebecca’s fugitive while the children were having their evening’s enjoyment.

“In the midst of it suddenly the door opened, and a poor negro rushed into the room, almost dead with fright, crying as he dropped on his knees at my feet, ‘Hide me, hide me, Mother Miriam, hide me, ’fore dey gits me; dey is close on, a-comin’ fast as they ken to put de chains on me. Hide me quick, for de Lord sake.’

“Quick as a flash thy uncle had grabbed the poor creature by his arm and pulled him into my bedroom, and off came the Santa Claus outfit and on to the dazed negro, mask and all; the sleigh bells were thrown round his neck, while he danced about in gay spirits as he was told to play that he



was old St. Nick. It was done just in time, for in rushed the white men who were on his trail.

“‘A gay time you are having this Christmas evening! Merry Christmas and Happy New Year to you all,’ they shouted. ‘What a fine Santa you have!’”

“And then they made bold to search the house for the negro who had run away. Upstairs and down, in cellar and garret, out in the barn, all about they went. The merry time went on in the house, where Old Santa wasted no time in jingling his bells and making fun for the children, all of whom took in the situation. Finally the men went on, feeling sure no negro was about the place. We put the black Santa to bed, after giving him a warm supper. How he blest us, especially my thoughtful boy, for if he had not used his wits so promptly, the poor negro would have been captured and taken back into slavery. And now Mr. Lincoln would free them all!

“If thee were a man, Bruce, thee would go like the boys and your uncle, my first born. It breaks my heart when I think maybe the latter may this very moment be near death.”

There was a sob at the door. Mother Libbie came in and threw her arms about the dear



Quaker grandmother, crying, "Thee must be brave, mother, indeed thee must," and the poor grandmother knew that her first born had fallen in the great cause!

Alas, little Bruce! War's horrors increased for him. His only thought was for the boys. Neighbor after neighbor fell in the strife. Up and down the list their names brought sorrow to the boy. He grew pale, and seemed less enthusiastic in calling his company for duty. He was longing for the companionship of the merry printer boys who had tossed and tumbled him about in their play or had held him tenderly in their arms, telling him stories and singing him songs. The thought of the shot and shell, the bayonets and swords flying above and about and piercing the hearts of the brave men filled him with agony lest the boys should be the victims.

The pages of Harper's Weekly pictured it all vividly. The children spent much time looking at the terrors depicted on the pages, and at the sight of the pictured battles the tears fell, and an awful fear stole into their tender hearts, the fear of childhood, which children alone can fathom.

It was in this state of mind that little Bruce was given a surprise. Papa Joe brought home with



him one evening just as the children were about to nestle in the trundle-bed, a little square box for Mother Libbie from her soldier boys.

On opening it, she found that it contained a picture at which she gazed a moment with tears in her eyes, then handed it to Bruce. He gave one look at the faces, then showered them with kisses. The next instant he had thrown the picture on the floor and with his bare feet jumped upon it, shouting in high glee as if he were wrestling with the real boys in one of their old play spells. Then he picked up the picture and stood gazing at it, with his little sister looking over his shoulder, long and earnestly. At last he cried, "They are homesick, mother, homesick. Look at their sad faces, just like Mr. Lincoln's. They don't like war, mother, see how long their hair is, and how they sit, so bent over. They are tired, mother, and most sick. Even their coats are crumpled up; they have been out in the cold and rain."

The little heart was near to breaking, as he cried out: "Where is my sword and my flag and my drum? I'll never play soldier again!"

Going over to the chair where he had put them when he came in from "drill," taking the little



sword in hand, he sheathed it, saying, "I felt just as though I was sticking it right into one of the boys when we had a battle to-day. I'll never touch it again. I'll break up the company!"

"You'll be a deserter then, Bruce," said little sister, "and they shoot deserters."

"I know that; I'll let them shoot me! I want the boys! I never will play soldier again!"

The next morning Mother Libbie heard one beat of the little drum, loud and long, and from out one and another front door, over back fences, from behind huge woodpiles, from some lofty tree-top, came the little boys of the company.

Bruce stood waiting for them with a face as sad and serious as Mr. Lincoln's.

"Boys," he said, as they gathered about him, "I can't be your captain any longer."

"O, go long now," "O, come on now," "Say, what is the matter with you, anyhow?" Thus shouted the boys with one accord.

"It is all too sad. When we make a 'charge' I feel it is all real, and that we are sticking our bayonets and running our swords right into them. I don't like war and I don't like to play war."

The boys were silent as they looked at the earnest face of their captain.



Softly from the open window came the music from the jew's-harp, "We will rally round the flag boys, we'll rally once again, shouting the battle cry of freedom!"

As soon as Bruce heard the encouraging tune, he, like many a real worn-out soldier, seizing the flag and whirling it high in mid-air, shouted, "Come on, boys, let's rally once again, let's drive it into them."

It needed but the word of the brave little "captain," when they all formed into line, and once again the voice of command fell on Mother Libbie's ear, "Present arms!" "Forward, march!" "Halt!" "Charge!" With flags flying, drums beating, horns tooting, up and down, the brave company went marching down the street.



## V.

“MOTHER, it’s a long time since we have heard from Edward, isn’t it?”

“Yes, dear.” There was a note of worryment in the mother’s voice.

“We have heard from the other boys quite often, haven’t we?”

“Yes, dear.”

“But since the last battle Edward hasn’t written, mother.”

“No, dear.”

“There wasn’t any Mc in the list. Where do you think he is?”

“Do not worry, dear, we will soon hear from him.”

To himself little Bruce was thinking that dear Edward might be sick with fever; or he might be wounded, or in the cruel prison, the pen, where like sheep they were driven; the place of filth, rats and disease, sapping the precious lives away!



All the evening the sober little face had grown feverish. There was a shadow of unrest on Mother Libbie's face.

At night from the trundle-bed her little boy called, "Mother, I want a drink of water, please. I feel sick." In an instant the mother was at the side of her boy.

For days the thought of war, its terrors from shot and shell, sickness and death, the wounded, even her own soldier boys were, for the great anxiety, almost forgotten, while she watched over her little soldier boy at home. A nation might lose its just cause; to Mother Libbie and Papa Joe the one thought was centered in the sick boy. Day and night, amid his suffering and delirium, the child called the names of the boys, and far away in the sunny South they were gathered about the camp fire, thinking of the dear ones in Mother Libbie's home; they were tired, wasted, hungry, homesick, with a longing for her fireside, wondering if all were well with their adopted home.

At last the little soldier boy grew better. He could sit in Papa Joe's big arm chair with the warm comforter wrapped about him. He could rest there a while and little sister could sit beside him. She must not tell him, though, that Mr.



Lincoln's face was more sad, that the little boy who had stood at his side in the picture had died, and that she was so very sorry for poor Mrs. Lincoln, too. She must not tell him that no word had come from Edward. He did not ask again about it, but seemed to feel that the boys would come home.

"Get me a pencil and paper, sister, please, I want to print a letter," and with much labor from his weakness he traced the words :

Dear Johnny :

I love you. Come home.

Your Bruce.

Then he was gently laid on his bed, quite tired out from the exertion of sitting up and printing the loving message.

After he was seemingly rested, he looked up into his mother's face and said, "Mother, the boys will all come home to you. Don't you worry any more."

And when their hopes were highest that their little boy would live, when the awful anxiety for days had been lessened, like the suddenness of the lightning's deathly stroke came a relapse. The blue eyes of the little soldier boy were closed forever ;



the golden curly locks fell about the fair brow which had given promise of a noble manhood.

The little captain gave no commands. The comrades gathered about him, weeping for their brave leader. The swords were sheathed, the drum silent. No marching up and down the street; no shouting; no songs of liberty from the lips of the young patriots. The sweet sounds were never heard again from the jew's-harp which had roused the weary company to rally round the flag.

Far away in the southern fields of war the boys were shouting with glee about an open box which was filled with the dainties from home. All joined hands about it and danced for joy. Comrades shared its contents, until, like magic, the good home viands disappeared, and sitting about the camp fires all the boys were silent, thinking of the dear ones at home who had thought of them so tenderly.

Out upon the evening air came the music of the song, "We Are Tenting Tonight on the Old Camp Ground," and soft and low the sad song echoed through the trees, "We Shall Meet, But We Shall Miss Him." The shadows of the lonely boys among the trees and tents made by the bright



fires showed many forms bent and faces cast down with sadness for the dear ones at home.

An inquiry was made for Captain Thomas. When he was located among the group about the open box of goodies, a telegram was handed to him. "Our Bruce is dead."

Over the hearts of the boys for whom the sad message was intended a sorrow was cast, deep and terrible in its intensity.

Could it be possible that they should never again see the dear little boy who was so beloved by them all! No words could come for a while, as they thought of the sorrow which had come to the kind friends in their adopted home. The tears fell in pity for them.

The camp fires never seemed so sad to them with the fitful light; the songs never so heart-felt. Three sad, homesick boys turned to their tents and wrapped their blankets about them, and tried to forget their sorrow in sleep, which would not come. Then, too, Edward was among the missing, which thought added to their sorrow.



## VI.

“MOTHER,” it was little sister who spoke, “Bruce couldn’t have endured not hearing from Edward. Oh, where do you think he is?”

“We may never know, dear, we can only hope.”

But months went by and no word from him.

“How earnestly Bruce had said they would all come home; it seemed as if he knew,” sighed little sister. She had to bear the burden of war alone now. And how lonely the trundle-bed seemed to her! Her whole world was changed. Young as she was, her great sorrow caused the merry laugh for which she was noted to cease, and the lively little girl to become more gentle and quiet.

The uncertainty of Edward’s fate hung like a pall over the hearts of his loved ones at home.

In the stillness of night, alone in her bed, little sister pictured in her mind a lonely grave or the dismal prison, and she thought “which is he in?”

There came news of the battle of Chickamauga, Sept. 20, 1863.



Soon after the battle a letter came which bore the glad news that Edward was living, but alas, a prisoner of war.

He had been taken to Richmond, Va., where he was confined for a month on Belle Isle, and from there he was removed to Danville, Virginia, where he was kept from December until April, 1864, and there he wrote to Papa Joe.

There were months of suspense to follow, when no word came from him, and the fear was that in these disease-laden prisons he had lost his health, and maybe he had died. Afterwards it was learned that the poor, homesick soldier had been sent to Andersonville prison, then to Charleston, S. C., then to Florence, S. C., where he was paroled at the close of the war. He was the last of the four printer boys to reach home.

When he came 'twas only a ghost of his former self. Pale to ghastliness, thin until the poor frame seemed likely to fall apart.

"Don't tell little sister that he has come," said Papa Joe. "Let's see if she will know him after all these long four years."

As she came into the house from school, at the top of the stairs there stood an apparition! Was



it a ghost? Was it a phantom? Not so to little sister.

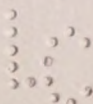
“Oh, it is my dear Edward!”

Bounding up the stairs, she threw her arms about his neck, crying and laughing, kissing and hugging him. There they stood for a moment with clasped hands, when little sister whispered, “He said you would all come home.”

When the future promised a glorious result with the safety of the Union, when the sad-faced man had given freedom to the colored race from the bondage of slavery’s chains; when the soldier boys who were spared the war’s terrible carnage came marching home victorious, the great commander-in-chief, Abraham Lincoln, was slain—just when the sun of his beneficence was greatest.

“Oh, how could little Bruce have borne the sadness of it; how could he, with his tenderness and love for the sad-faced man have endured to see the people in their sorrow, wringing their hands and weeping?”

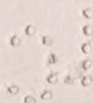
Evening has come, and Mother Libbie has gathered her four brave boys to her hearthstone once more.





“My four brave boys have all come home,  
How bright the sun does shine!  
They’ve all come home from out the war,  
Those four dear boys of mine.”

But she sighed and grieved for the little soldier  
boy she lost.

















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